

For Immediate Release

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Picking up the Signal with Diamond Antenna

Lean Becomes Foundation for Growth at Local Communications Systems Company

(Littleton, MA) – Diamond Antenna & Microwave, a high impact manufacturing company in Central Massachusetts in recent years, has seen a three-fold increase in employees while more than doubling their sales and with the help of the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership is poised to do so again. A key element of this impressive growth strategy is the implementation of new workforce practices to improve quality and efficiency at their Littleton facility.

"The company plans to grow 20-30% in the near future and if there is no infrastructure in place then you can't manage growth properly," said Jeffrey Gilling, President of [Diamond Antenna & Microwave](#). Saying they needed to be prepared, Diamond reached out to MassMEP to leverage its many resources.

Mass MEP was able to guide the Diamond team through an application process to secure Workforce Training Fund Grants enabling them to defray some of the costs for a training program specifically designed to meet Diamond's growth strategy. The continuous improvement program instruction provided to the company by MassMEP included TimeWise Le102, Value Stream Mapping, Kaizen events like 5s, ISO9000-2001 training, and basic Lean for job shops.

"There were a few areas that needed to be 'Leaned' at the company." said Gilling. Diamond Antenna, which employs forty-seven people in Littleton, has been a forerunner in the design and manufacture of precision microwave rotary components used for air traffic control, satellite, radar and communication system antennas for over fifty years.

"Lean training made Diamond more competitive," stated MassMEP's Tim Wadlow, project manager. "Initially, there were skeptics who said that Lean could not work in a job shop. They

found that using 5s to reduce travel distance and a cellular layout in a high volume area had great results. They ended up with a culture change and they were pleasantly surprised."

Among the challenges Diamond faced: there had been some quality issues with a Satcom rotary joint used for shipboard systems that resulted in field failures. Value stream mapping exercises identified specific things that Diamond could improve upon. This Satcom design now has a 99% plus yield, meaning that less than 1% of the units through final assembly have to be reworked. They have had zero returns for warranty claims and customers are satisfied. In real dollars this represents three years at over \$2 million in sales.

Gilling explained the company always adhered to MIL-I-45208, a military quality standard, and had not applied for ISO9001-2000 because their clients audited them periodically and had not required other certification. ISO9001-2000 shows how important it is to document departmental procedures and look at overall objectives and your progress toward attainment. "Diamond is not a traditional manufacturer but there are certainly some applications that can be standardized, so it (ISO 9001-2000) was a good addition for the company at this time," said Gilling.

"Core competencies in Massachusetts are not low tech," said Gilling. "Enlightened companies have to realize that if they want to climb the ladder of business proficiency they need to keep on investing in assistance from organizations like the MEP and participating in manufacturing groups. MassMEP represents the competencies in the area of manufacturing that allow us to develop advantages in the marketplace. Core competencies and market opportunities leverage into a competitive advantage."

About Diamond Antenna and Microwave Corporation:

Since 1956, Diamond Antenna has delivered precision microwave rotary couplers for use in radar and satellite communication antennas. In 2001, Diamond-Roltran was formed to enter the next-generation slip ring business with their Roll-Rings - an extension of Diamond's core competence in precision rotary components. Their facility is located at Porter Road in Littleton, Massachusetts.

About Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership:

The MassMEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP system is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2,000 manufacturing and business "coaches" whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits and enhanced global competitiveness. For more information, please visit www.massmep.org, or phone 1-800-MEP-4MFG.

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